

Driving Investment & Sustainable Growth for Oxfordshire (DISGO)



Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Impact Report

SEPTEMBER 2024





**Driving
Economic
Growth**



Foreword

The 2023/24 financial year presented significant challenges, particularly with the government's decision to end its sponsorship of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), shifting focus to democratic institutions. As part of this transition, our functions were scheduled to be transferred to Oxfordshire County Council from 1st April 2024. We are working closely with the County Council as our new 'owner' to develop a comprehensive and ambitious business plan setting out our key priorities to support Oxfordshire's economy over the mid term.

At the beginning of the year, we initiated the development of a new Strategic Economic Plan, which involved an independent review of economic activity, stakeholder engagement, and open workshops. This process aimed to understand the county's ambitions, constraints, and opportunities in a post-Covid/EU Exit context. The extensive engagement, supported by a refreshed economic evidence base, resulted in a clear vision for where the county wants to be by 2030, supported by an Action Plan. This work was carried out against a backdrop of national political pressure, geopolitical instability due to conflicts such as the war in Ukraine and ongoing inflationary pressures.

We are immensely proud of our staff's commitment and achievements, which provide a solid foundation for the next phase of our corporate journey post-transition. As we develop a new 5-year Business Plan, we continue to operate within a "whole system" approach. This approach involves partnering with local authorities, health, education, the third sector, and business communities to identify collaboration opportunities that extend our collective reach and capitalise on our capabilities and resources in a tight fiscal environment. Despite the challenges, we made strong progress against all our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and secured significant foreign direct investment, jobs, and capabilities to enhance our performance locally, nationally, and internationally.

Throughout the year, businesses adapted, innovated, and thrived with the support of our Business, Skills, Strategy and Investment teams, focusing on innovation, enterprise, and resilience. Although our grant programmes were reduced, they still attracted record co-investment, helping businesses pivot, reposition, and seek new opportunities. Our Growth Hub support service and diagnostic tool-kit provided over 2,150 hours of support and engaged with 1,792 businesses, helping to create and safeguard 775 jobs. This support enabled local businesses, charities, and social enterprises to overcome the pandemic's legacy impacts and respond confidently to the latest economic challenges, including global instability and supply chain disruptions.

We advanced several major service delivery initiatives, including our Visitor Economy Destination Management Plan and Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) programmes, such as Social Contract and Visitor Economy Renaissance. These initiatives aimed to support key sectors and businesses, improve workforce opportunities, and position Oxfordshire as a progressive and strategic location for engagement, visitation, and investment. We surpassed our Inward Investment KPI targets, securing 46 inbound investments (target 34), 2,486 jobs (target 640), and £570 million in investment (target £480 million).

Our efforts to support a changing and challenging labour market, fuelled by labour shortages, continued. Our Skills Team interacted with businesses, providing support from referrals to dedicated assistance. We supported over 3,500 young people through our annual CareersFest event, which brought together 75+ local businesses and organisations to highlight career opportunities, including a twilight session for parents. We also focused on optimising apprenticeship uptake across Oxfordshire, securing 380+ apprenticeship starts, increasing completions, and mobilising £3.6 million+ of unallocated Apprenticeship Levy by March 2024.

We continue to promote Oxfordshire's assets and potential through traditional and social media channels, reaching local, national, and global audiences.

Throughout the year, we actively engaged with the Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership, aiming to harness the collective potential of economic assets across this geography for local and national benefit. We also contributed to the development of an investment prospectus for the Oxford to Cambridge Region, preparing for a presence at the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) in May 2024.

I extend my gratitude to our volunteer Board colleagues who supported us through the transition, our partners who helped us navigate challenging times, and our staff who remained focused on delivery despite political and organisational changes. We are confident that Oxfordshire's economy will continue to grow sustainably, support innovation, and remain strong and agile as we face further economic changes driven by the new UK government. With solid foundations built over the past nine years, we are clear on our role in helping Oxfordshire support inclusivity, achieve its net zero ambitions, and continue as a force for national economic growth.

Nigel Tipple

Chief Executive

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

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Executive Summary

We are the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, OxLEP. Our role is to champion Oxfordshire's economic potential, acting as a catalyst and convener to drive a dynamic, sustainable, and growing economy.

Our mission is to inspire and support business, to secure investment and drive opportunities for economic prosperity across our communities. This report sets out why we do what we do, who has benefitted from our work and the impacts that have been delivered over the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

OxLEP works for the people of Oxfordshire; for the entrepreneurs, businesses and social-minded enterprises, and for the county itself and its connectivity, nationally and internationally.

During this period OxLEP has:

- ✓ **Supported over 1790 businesses** from across all Districts
- ✓ Provided over **2800 hours of expert business support**
- ✓ Coordinated the '**Joint Oxfordshire Business Support**' (JOBS) group to increase collaboration with District Economic Development Teams
- ✓ Facilitated the **Oxfordshire Net Zero** steering group
- ✓ **Inspired over 3250 students**, including more than 250 from special schools through CareersFest and the Aspirations Day
- ✓ Generated 115 entries across all categories in the **Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2024**
- ✓ **Retained over £3.6 million** of unused apprenticeship levy
- ✓ Supported **35 Community Employment Plans**
- ✓ Secured 46 Foreign direct investments providing, 2,486 jobs, generating £570 million in investment
- ✓ Supported, monitored and completed Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects which overall have **invested £441.7m in Oxfordshire**
- ✓ **Funded Visitor Economy marketing** campaigns engaging millions of people
- ✓ Supported 52 Visitor Economy businesses with **total grants allocated of £840,884**
- ✓ Had almost **2,000 downloads of podcasts** across the two first 'OxTalks' series between April 2023 and March 2024
- ✓ **Grown followers** on social media by 7.5% to **over 25,810**

We are proud of our results and impacts over this period, but the job of championing Oxfordshire's economic potential, acting as a catalyst and convener to drive a dynamic, sustainable, and growing economy must continue.

1.0 The Plan for Action

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) 2022-24 Corporate Plan set out that we were overseeing a £3.3 billion programme of activity supporting the delivery of major infrastructure development, skills and training, business growth, supply chains and inward investment and internationalisation, AND crucially, that we act as a single 'front door' and portal for support and opportunity for Oxfordshire businesses and their current and future workforces. We are open, transparent and collaborative.

This impact report is for the second half of this corporate plan period, during which our priorities were:

For People

- ➔ Helping to manage Oxfordshire's consistently tight labour market through reducing the significant skills shortage in identified sectors and roles.
- ➔ Helping to provide clear, diverse and inclusive career pathways for adults to ensure that they are aware of the Oxfordshire Labour Market and sectors.
- ➔ Ensuring that all young people, (including disadvantaged and SEND) have the right career information and support for them to make successful and informed decisions about their next best step in line with the Oxfordshire Labour Market.
- ➔ Maximising the investments made in Oxfordshire's **skills & training infrastructure** through the **Local Growth and Getting Building Funds**.
- ➔ Supporting **vocational & technical skills** provision, which includes promoting T-levels and apprenticeships offers.
- ➔ Leveraging the social impact of large infrastructure projects through Community Employment Plans (CEPs).
- ➔ Ensuring our support services are cohesive, easy to access and user friendly for businesses, focused on increased resilience and competitiveness.
- ➔ Offering dedicated support covering innovation advice, finance, and scaling business operations, focused on helping firms to adapt to the post-pandemic trading environment.
- ➔ Attracting inward investment through Invest Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire's inward investment service working with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to expand Oxfordshire's global brand and attract trade and investment opportunities that support business growth, job creation, recovery and renewal and adapt to post-EU transition.

For Places and Connectivity

- ➔ Delivering a comprehensive package of support focused on recovery of Oxfordshire's visitor economy through our Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme.
- ➔ Maximising retained business rates generated through our Enterprise Zones to support businesses, improved connectivity, and resilient communities.
- ➔ Continuing our investment programme through the Local Growth and Getting Building Funds.

For Businesses

- ➔ Providing a core interface for businesses through which wider support services can be brokered and signposted.
- ➔ Through a range of targeted interventions and services, providing responsive, agile information, advice & guidance to businesses to adapt processes.

Why is our Role and Mission Important?

OxLEP is the catalyst and convener that supports growth, sustainability and stability in the Oxfordshire economy, all key characteristics of an 'inclusive economy'.

For over a decade – as the local enterprise partnership for Oxfordshire – we have delivered significantly for the county, making major impacts across our economy and supporting our business community to be the best they can be at times of real need.

We have, alongside key partners, secured investment to the tune of around £1 billion (enabling an overall investment in the county of £3.3 billion) with positive impacts felt across the county's communities - impacts that could have potentially been lost to Oxfordshire without our leading role.

Between October 2016 & March 2023, OxLEP Business engaged with over 6,200 businesses, providing them with around 18,000 hours of support and advice, worth over £28.75 million. Perhaps most impressively - during a time that is associated with a period of financial turbulence via Brexit, Covid and increased levels of inflation - nearly 15% of all businesses supported by OxLEP Business reported that they had grown by 10%, or more, per year.

OxLEP Business supports clients at different stages of their development, with around a quarter of those supported classified as being 'start-ups', with a further quarter classed as 'established'. Meanwhile - around 15% were pre-start organisations, with just under 10% supported classed as 'growing' (showing 10% annual growth) with 5% seen as scale-up businesses (20% growth per year).

Oxfordshire's strong economy is driven by a high concentration of innovation assets, both through business and academia, which position the county at the forefront of global innovation. Oxfordshire has world-leading strengths in key transformative technologies, with rapidly growing global markets offering significant opportunities for growth.

However, across Oxfordshire there are 16 wards ranked among the 20% most deprived in England with Greater Leys within the 10% of most deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation; Workbook: Oxfordshire Local Skills Dashboard (tableau.com)). These communities are deprived in terms of 'Education Skills and Training' in contrast to deprivation in terms of housing and living environment. To meet the growing skills gaps and labour shortages of our global innovation sectors and core services, and to support those furthest from the labour market, we need to ensure that everyone benefits from Oxfordshire becoming an economic powerhouse.

Through operational and strategic delivery, OxLEP Skills' focus is ensuring that everyone has access and support to employment and training through upskilling and re-skilling, while aiming to ensure that the next generation can develop the skills employers need. Without OxLEP Skills to lead the way on navigating the skills landscape for the benefit of Oxfordshire's businesses, we might not have the highly skilled workforce which the county so desperately needs.

Oxford & Oxfordshire are also important domestic and international visitor destinations:

- ➔ At its peak (2019) related sectors accounted for **10% of employment**
- ➔ Contributed over **£2.3 billion per annum** to the economy
- ➔ **Supported 42,000 jobs** across the county
- ➔ **Included Iconic 'brands'**: Oxford, both Universities, The Cotswolds, Blenheim Palace, Bicester Village, Henley-on-Thames, The Thames & Chilterns.

3.0 How We Work

OxLEP works collaboratively with partners to promote and deliver innovation-led economic opportunity for Oxfordshire and UK PLC through our strategic themes of:

- ➔ People (Skills)
- ➔ Enterprise (Business and Innovation)
- ➔ Place (Housing, the Environment and Employment Space)
- ➔ Connectivity (Road, Rail, Cycle ways, Utilities, Telecoms and Broadband)

OxLEP's ability to communicate and engage locally as well as across the County, the UK and internationally is evident through our activities and our impacts.



**SKILLS
FOR LIFE**

Funded by

Department
for Education

3.1 For People

OxLEP Skills (Our Skills Hub) delivers through five key themes:

- ➔ **Strategic oversight** to identify skills needs and match skills provision to local opportunities and needs
- ➔ **Apprenticeships and T Levels** promoting technical vocational education as valued career options
- ➔ Partnering with the **Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)** to deliver the Careers Hub which brings together 58 schools/colleges, FE, SEND and alternative provision to build ambitious careers programmes
- ➔ **The Social Contract Programme**, a £1.7 million fund through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) via Oxfordshire County Council, to help those people, communities, and businesses most impacted by the Covid pandemic and moving forwards the cost-of-living crisis; and
- ➔ **Delivering Skills Bootcamps**, a £1.7 million contract from the Department of Education, to address skills gaps identified for Oxfordshire through DfE's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

3.2 For Businesses

OxLEP Business (Our Growth Hub) provides a one-stop service supporting businesses, entrepreneurs, and social-minded enterprises to find the support they need to start-up, run, strengthen, and grow their business. The support is available to all Oxfordshire SMEs – small and medium sized enterprises with less than 250 staff and an annual turnover under €50 million.

OxLEP Business aims to simplify the business support landscape, which continues to be complex, with the multitude of business support schemes both locally and nationally funded through various central government functions. Our partners include the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), Enterprise Europe, Innovate UK, BIPC (Business and Intellectual Property Centre) and the British Business Bank.

OxLEP Business provides businesses with probably the widest range of support available anywhere in England, including:

- ➔ A frontline triage service, the 'Business Support Tool', for all SME businesses to register for support, share their challenges and their ambitions for growth
- ➔ Business Support Action Plans to all SME businesses who engage
- ➔ A series of webinars and workshops designed to meet the needs and ambitions of the SME businesses engaged
- ➔ A Start-Up Bootcamp for residents who want to start a business
- ➔ Peer to peer learning support,
- ➔ Business networking, e.g. OxBOoSt and Women in Business
- ➔ Expert 1:1 business advice, coaching and mentoring
- ➔ Business grants with varying levels of match funding requirement,
- ➔ Referrals to other Oxfordshire and national support that meets business needs
- ➔ Targeted support on topics such as Net Zero, Exporting, Innovation and Developing your Business Purpose
- ➔ The Business Directory <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/business-directory/>

We work closely with our Local Authority partners, having overall responsibility for convening the Economic Development teams for the county on a bi monthly basis to share intelligence and deliver collaborative activities. This 'Joint Oxfordshire Business Support' (JOBS) group focuses on Economic Growth, Covid, Shared Prosperity Funding allocation and collaboration, Skills programmes including Careers and Enterprise and apprenticeships.

We are also leading the development of a cross-county approach to net zero, convening a strategic group comprised of Local Authority partners, appropriate SME's and other key stakeholders such as the Low Carbon Hub to create a shared approach and 'one stop shop' for local businesses.



Engaging with thousands of small businesses every year provides **OxLEP Business** with incredibly detailed data and insight on those businesses. The Business Support Tool provides rich intelligence to describe the needs of Oxfordshire businesses, and to inform the support delivered. This intelligence also informs reporting to national government departments.

OxLEP Business' two European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supported programmes of eScalate, which primarily worked with scale-up companies, social enterprise-focused organisations,

OxLEP Business Celebration Event: <https://youtu.be/pbgITJyBPw>

and the Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programme, which has helped drive innovation-led activity into Oxfordshire businesses, both reached a scheduled closedown in April 2023. Key figures from across Oxfordshire's business community gathered on 7 June 2023 to celebrate these major support programmes which made a significant impact on the county's business landscape. For every £1 spend of the eScalate programme, £20.93 of value was created and for the ISfB programme the figure was £11.72 of value created. A total value of over £172m to the Oxfordshire economy.



OxLEP Business 2023 Celebration Event



Subscribe

3



Share

Save



Our Strategy and Internationalisation team promotes international trade and investment to help investors and businesses from across the globe to locate, relocate, and grow within Oxfordshire. We are DBT's Oxfordshire partner for investment working directly with overseas consulates and embassies.

- ➔ Supporting international investors and those looking to connect with potential overseas investors
- ➔ Promoting investment opportunities in key sectors, clusters, and capabilities to a global audience
- ➔ Identifying commercial premises for businesses, arranging property viewings, tours of key facilities and meetings with sector specialists
- ➔ Connecting businesses with professional services providers and signposting to business support organisations and sector-specific networks
- ➔ Providing ongoing aftercare to Oxfordshire companies and investors
- ➔ Supporting businesses to trade internationally working with DBT's International Trade Advisory Service
- ➔ Maximising investment opportunities into our Enterprise Zones and supporting companies to prosper

3.3 For Places and Connectivity

Strategic Economic Planning is a critical role fulfilled by OxLEP which has required our lead in the development of the various strategies and plans over the last few years. All of the strategies and plans have required us to work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders and partners to drive investment, innovation, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth within Oxfordshire.

Our capital programme team manages the delivery of £multi-million infrastructure and investment programmes that are positively impacting Oxfordshire's People, Businesses, Places and Connectivity.

These are strategic, long-term programmes and projects that started long before the period covered by this report, that will deliver impacts for decades to come.

OxLEP's Local Growth Fund projects have invested £107.5 million and enabled £94 million in match funding, across 30 projects that are enhancing the lives and skills of people, enriching places, sparking enterprise and boosting connectivity in Oxfordshire. Explore the 30 projects here:



<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/local-growth-fund-projects>



Link to video: <https://youtu.be/ILgZyoySEzg>

OxLEP's Getting Building Fund has worked alongside private and public sector partners, to give Oxfordshire businesses and communities a boost following the Covid outbreak. The £8.4 million investment supported the following six programmes:

- ➔ The Energy Systems Accelerator pilot (mini TESA)
- ➔ Business Investment Fund Grants
- ➔ Meanwhile in Oxfordshire – supporting the regeneration of high streets in Oxfordshire's county towns
- ➔ Digital Investment Plan – Rural Gigabit Voucher Programme
- ➔ Clinical BioManufacturing Facility enabling works
- ➔ Green Construction Skills Centre



Link to video: <https://youtu.be/hrUI8car53U>

To address the impacts of the pandemic on the Oxfordshire Visitor Economy OxLEP established the 2-year Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme (£1.64 million) with two main aims (overseen by our Culture and Visitor Economy Subgroup (CVESG)):

- ➔ To support the recovery of the visitor economy (tourism) sector (post Covid)
- ➔ To support delivery of the aims of the Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan 2020

The primary objective of the programme was:

“To attract visitors and ensure that Oxford and Oxfordshire maintain its position as one of the UK’s most desirable visitor destinations for local, national and international visitors, with a focus on attracting value from all visitors and encouraging green and sustainable tourism and practices.”

The main programme areas were:

- ➔ Strategic marketing campaigns - nine commissioned in total
- ➔ Improving business competitiveness - providing grants & digital training
- ➔ Rebuilding market share - Oxfordshire Welcome, Business Visitor Trade Promotion
- ➔ Strengthening sector leadership – developing the first Destination Management Plan for Oxfordshire



3.4 Communicating to Engage

The communications team focusses much of their efforts on ensuring OxLEP’s digital performance and ability to reach new organisations is strong, adaptable and consistent, underpinning the breadth of the organisation’s delivery. Communication and engagement are supported by:

- ➔ Delivering and supporting brand identity,
- ➔ Developing and delivering new websites for OxLEP Skills and OxLEP Business,
- ➔ The launch and delivery of a new podcast series – ‘OxTalks’, aimed at showcasing Oxfordshire’s SME community as well as OxLEP’s business support excellence. The podcast series has secured commercial sponsorship from law firm Mills & Reeve.
- ➔ Creating meaningful communications and content positioned to engage our identified audiences and key demographics.

4.0

Who Has Benefitted

OxLEP engages strategically and practically with thousands of individuals and businesses across Oxfordshire. Across all channels, OxLEP now has over 25,810 followers on social media – a 7.5% year-on-year rise in overall following between April 2023 and March 2024.

Our 'most engaged' demographic of followers on social media are as follows:

- Works in business development (20% of all followers)
- Works in a company of 11 to 50 employees (16% of all followers)
- Business services (3.6% of all followers)
- Location of 'greater Oxford' (49% of all followers)
- 'Senior' positions within their company (32% of all followers)

There were around 14,500 unique visitors to our OxLEP Business website between April 2023 and March 2024.

Through the Social Contract Programme - over 650 businesses have been directly engaged on their skills needs, 287 large apprenticeship levy paying employers have been engaged, with 111 SMEs offered advice with 159 hours of guidance and support.

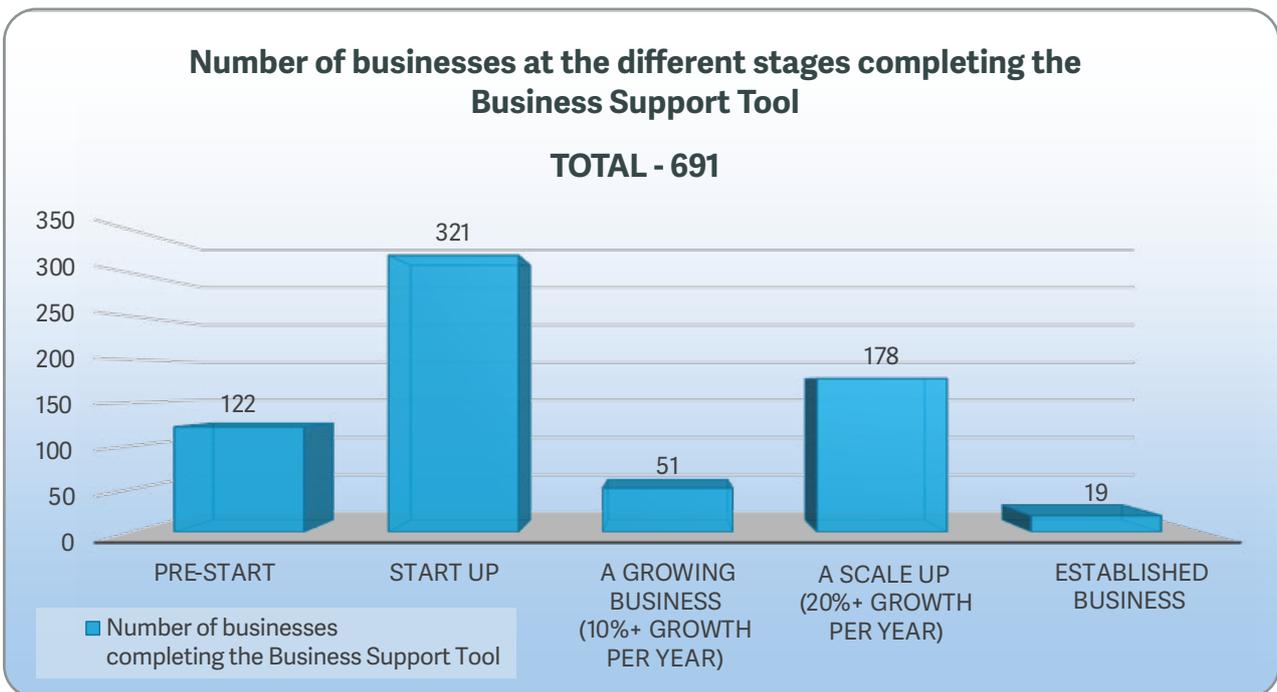
At least 97 SME's have accessed unused levy to create a new role through an apprenticeship, or utilised it to upskill a current employee.

35 Community Employment Plans were supported engaging 52 businesses and creating 52 new apprenticeships linked to strategic building developments and 803 volunteering hours undertaken.

- 52 business volunteers acting as an Enterprise Advisor
- 307 businesses active with careers initiatives across schools/colleges, and
- 13 cornerstones employers providing strategic support and guidance

'The Aspirations Day' event in 2023 for young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), engaged over 250 students from special schools. This gave the students the opportunity to meet with employers and providers and discuss their next steps.

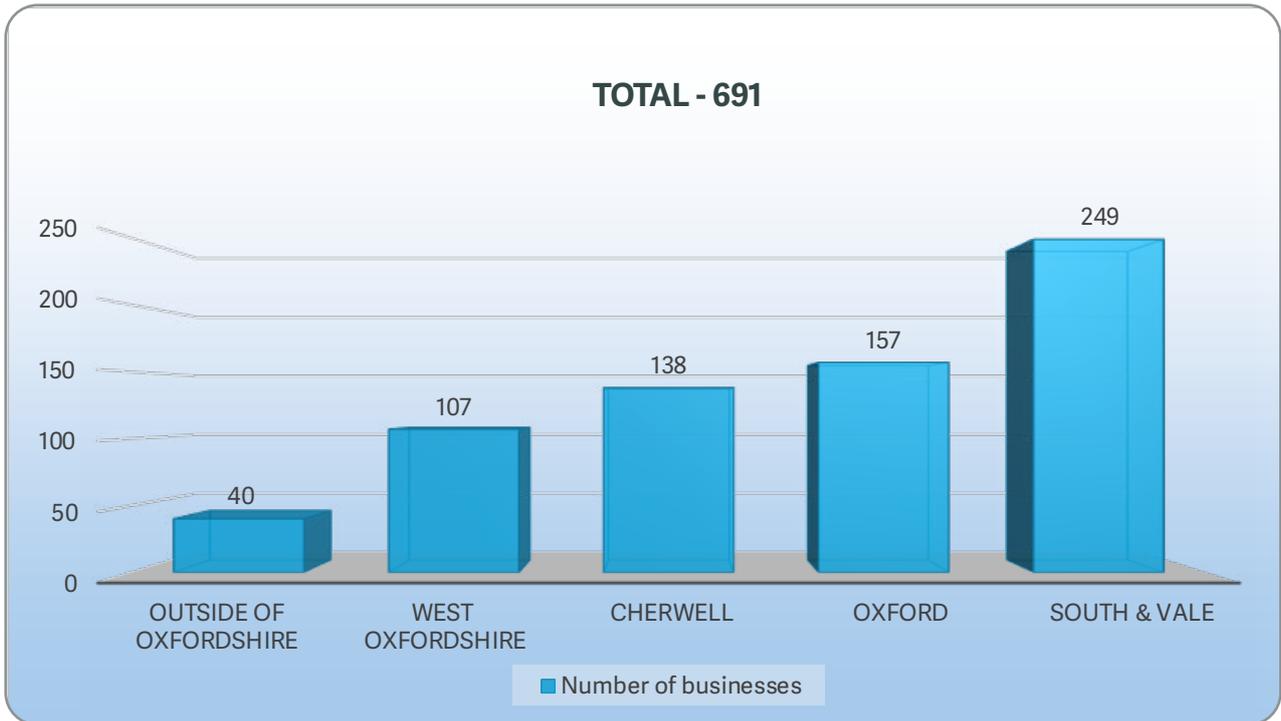
Between the 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 691 businesses completed the Business Support Tool. The different stages of these businesses are shown in the table below.



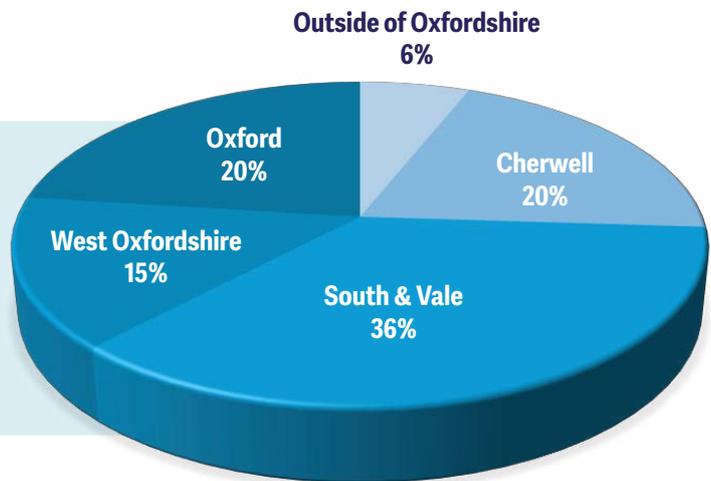
Each of these businesses were provided with a business support action plan to detail the support that OxLEP and others can offer.

An additional 1101 businesses engaged with or were engaged by OxLEP Business during this time and were provided with a high-level business support action plan. These high-level business support action plans were designed to allow the businesses to evaluate the offer quickly and to encourage them to engage.

A selection of the data from the businesses completing the Business Support Tool is provided below



The pie chart below shows the number of businesses completing the Business Support Tool by district.



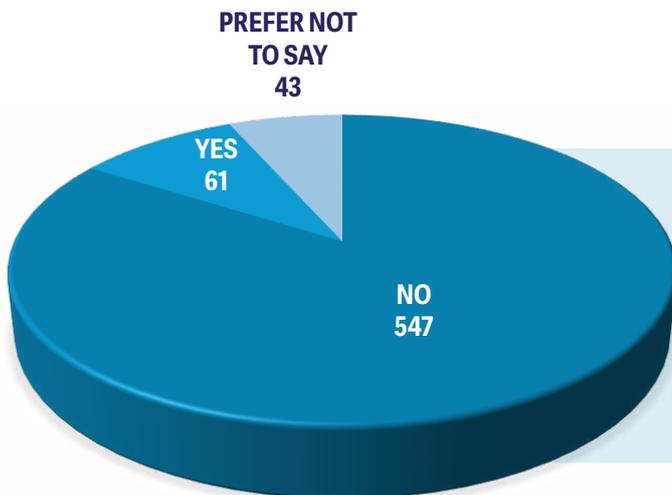
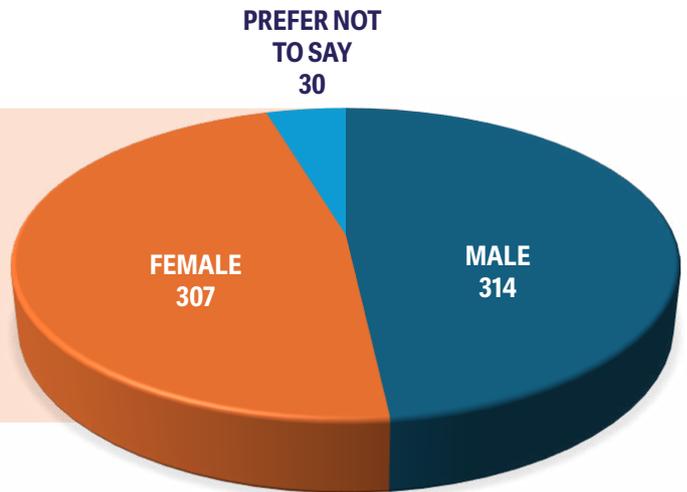
Business needs highlighted through the Business Support Tool from the 1st April 2023 until the 31st March 2024 are shown in the chart below.

This information is continually reviewed and used to adapt the support that is offered by OxLEP Business.



The gender split for the business owners who have completed the Business Support tool.

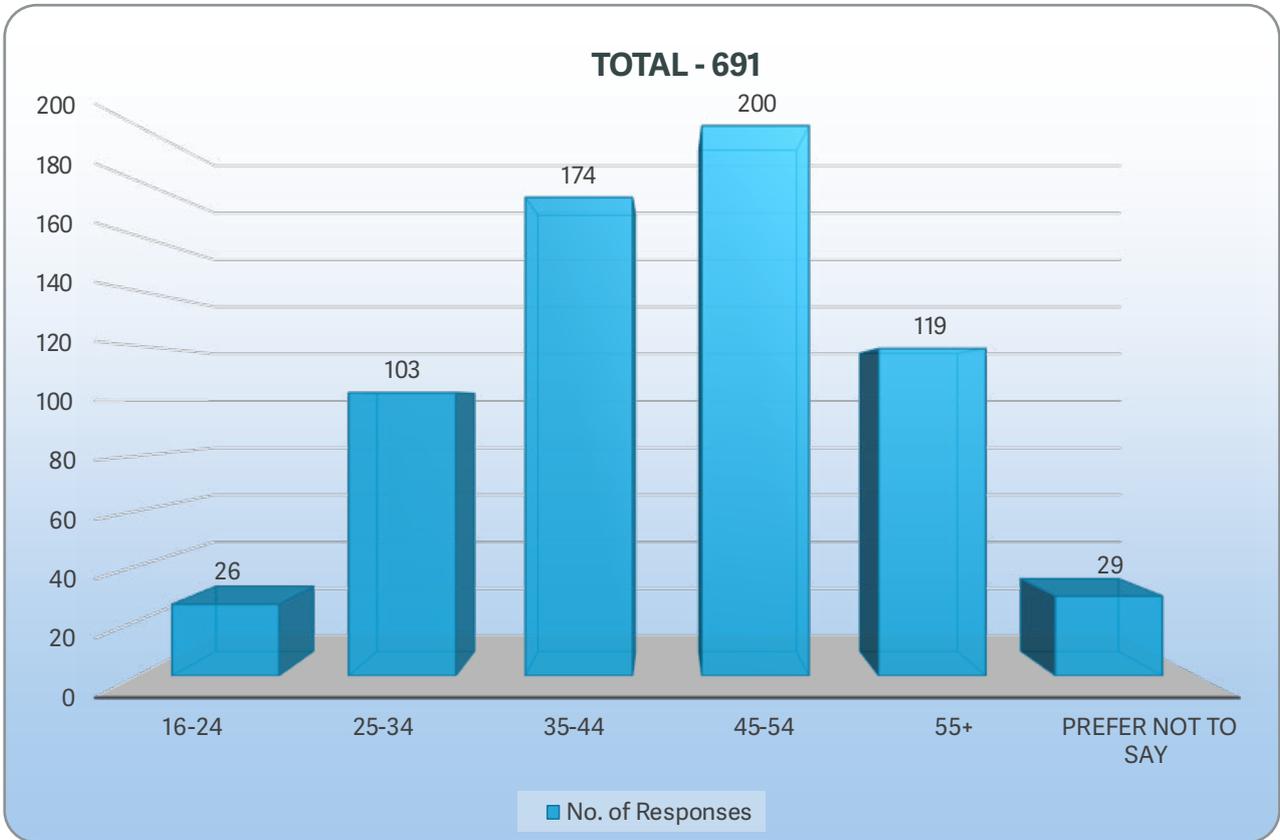
The demographic questions are optional so are not always completed.



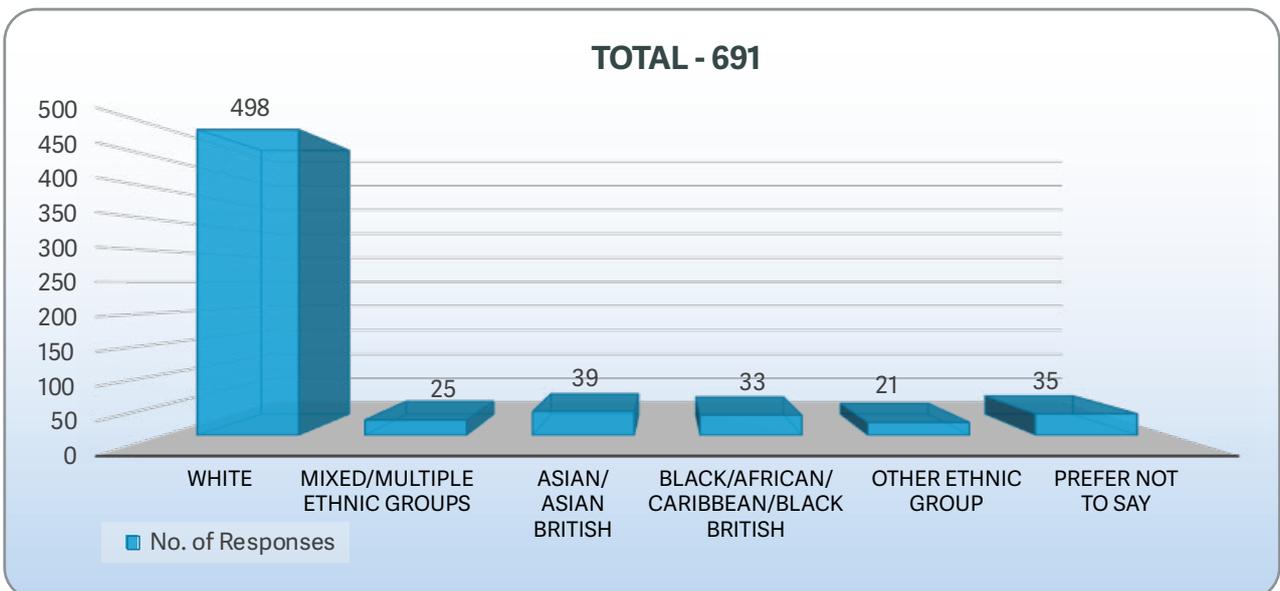
Do you have a disability?

The disability information for the Business Owners who have completed the business support tool.

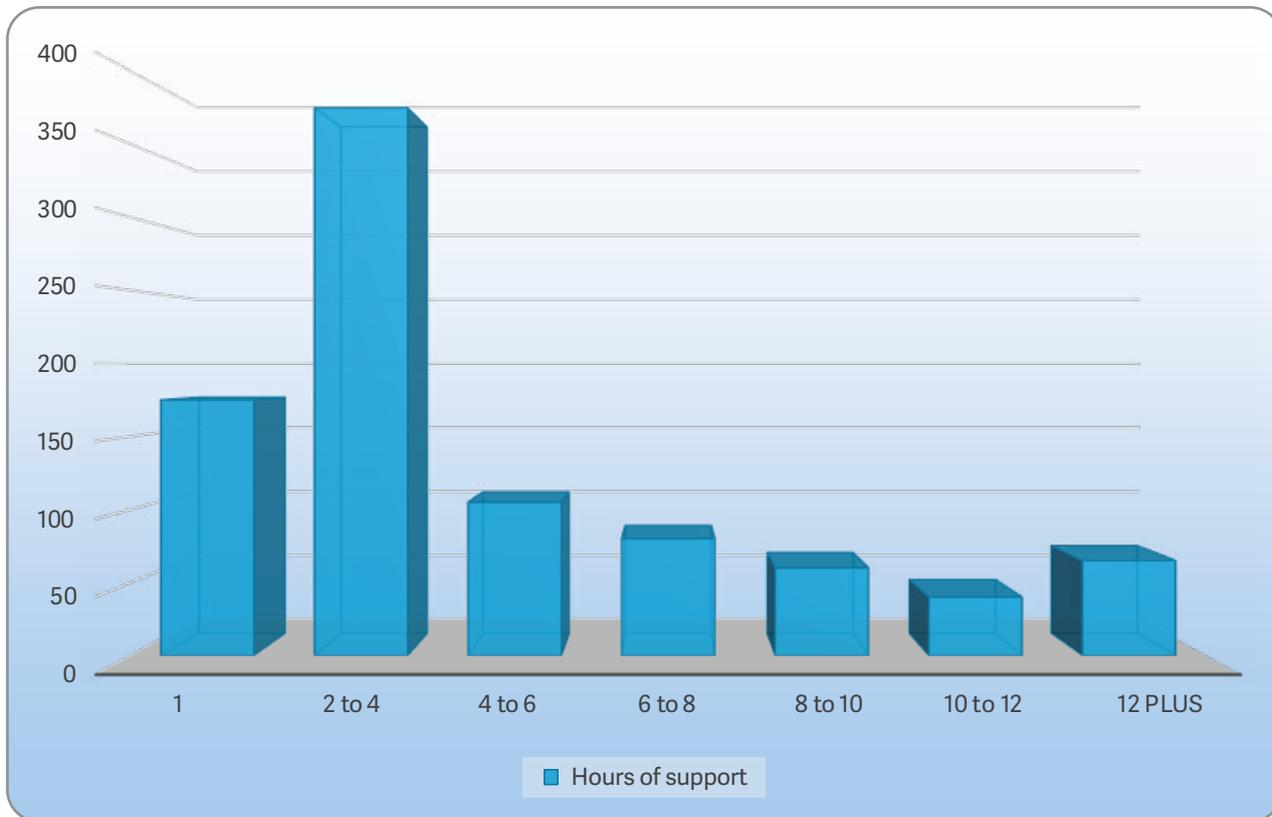
The age range of the Business Owners who have completed the business support tool.



The ethnicity of the Business Owners who have completed the business support tool



OxLEP Business' support is varied and reflects the needs of businesses. Whilst some businesses choose to engage with a sole event, we have a number of businesses engaging with the variety of support. Over 15% of businesses have engaged with over 6 hours of support, and 10% have received more than 12 hours of support.



The Visitor Economy Grant scheme supported 52 businesses who received **£842,000** worth of grants between them. The Oxfordshire businesses supported represented the following sectors

- DISTILLING, RECTIFYING, AND BLENDING OF SPIRITS
- LICENSED RESTAURANTS, UNLICENSED RESTAURANTS & CAFES
- CULTURAL EDUCATION
- INDEPENDENT RETAILERS BASED IN OXFORDSHIRE
- TOURIST DESTINATIONS
- SPORTS, RECREATION & WELL-BEING ACTIVITIE FOR VISITORS
- VISITOR ATTRACTIONS
- MANUFACTURE OF CIDER, BEER, & WINE
- PASSENGER TRANSPORT WATER & LAND
- LICENSED CLUBS, PUBLIC HOUSES & BARS
- RENTING & LEASING OF PASSENGER WATE TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT
- MUSEUMS ACTIVITIES
- OPERATION OF HISTORICAL SITES & BUILDINGS AND SIMILAR VISITOR ATTRACTIONS
- PERFORMING ARTS & THEATRES
- TRAVEL AGENCY & TOUR OPERATOR ACTIVITIES
- YOUTH HOSTELS & OTHER COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION

The Power of Apprenticeships

LCMB on Receiving Apprenticeship Levy Transfer

'It was OxLEP who made us aware of the apprenticeship levy transfer, a scheme where employers who do not utilise all their apprenticeship levy themselves can pledge up to 25 per cent of their funds to support SMEs, charities and social enterprises. At LCMB, we recognise that people spend up to 90% of their working lives in buildings, so we are committed to optimising building performance to help organisations thrive. Based in Adderbury, Oxfordshire, our team of expert consultants deliver sustainable building optimisation projects that save energy and improve infrastructure. We also address the skills shortage in our sector by supporting apprenticeships. Our Degree apprentice, Dominic Hayes, contributes to key projects while pursuing a BEng (Hons) in Building Service Design Engineering. We work closely with OxLEP Skills, receiving apprenticeship levy funds, from Howdens, to support this apprentice.'

Harriet Stuchbury,
Senior Consultant at building performance specialists LCMB



<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/lcmbcasestudy>



Levy Utilisation

NHS Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.



Shilpa Bhatt,
Apprenticeships
& Widening
Participation Lead

"Our GP Practices in Primary Care and care homes in our integrated care system are all small SMEs who have benefitted from a considerable number of levy transfers from local levy paying employers.

This has covered the cost of training for key roles such as nursing associate apprenticeships as foundation degree for nursing. This is the front door for the NHS."

Shilpa Bhatt,
Apprenticeships & Widening Participation Lead,
NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board



The Hill Group Support Construction Apprenticeships

in Oxfordshire Through Levy Pledge



Highlights from one of the strategic development CEPs include having on average 13 construction trade apprentices working on site each year; maintaining a 10% of the workforce aged between 18 – 25; engaging with various county initiatives which bring employers closer to local schools and colleges such as the 'Find Your Future' virtual careers platform; offering site visits on a rolling basis to numerous pupils from local schools and colleges; and completing formal work placements for trade students from local Further Education colleges



Students visiting a construction site

<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/hillgroupcasestudy/>



Nairne Barker



Nairne started her career as a level 3 Business Administration Apprentice with Oxfordshire County Council in 2017, progressing to complete level 4. In recognition of her achievements, Nairne won Advanced Apprentice of the Year and Overall Apprentice of the Year at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2019.

In 2020, Nairne undertook a business development role with Abingdon & Witney College, during which time she won Young Business Person of the Year at the Cherwell Business Awards. Nairne said: *"I never would have applied for that if I hadn't won the one back in 2019. When I applied in 2019, I did it as a nice self-reflection exercise, I didn't think I would win! It was an incredible honour to be recognised in a completely different category for all the work I'd gone on to do as well."*

Nairne returned to Oxfordshire County Council in January 2024 as the Strategic Apprenticeship Lead. She is currently working towards her third apprenticeship – a Chartered Management Degree apprenticeship – and plans to progress to level 7 Advanced Diploma in Strategic Learning and Development once she has completed this.

Nairne was selected from 17 entrants to win the Shining Star Award at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2024, an award which recognises individuals who have gone on to achieve great things in their career since completing their first apprenticeship. She is a long-standing apprenticeship ambassador with OxLEP and a shining example of the personal and professional development you can achieve through the apprenticeship route.



Apprentice of the Year 2019



Winning the Shining Star Award in 2024



Clare Nash Architecture



We are a dedicated team of designers passionate about architecture and the environment, with many years of industry experience. As problem solvers, we specialise in transforming existing spaces into dream homes that meet your lifestyle needs, positively impact the environment, and complement your outdoor space.

Recently, our business faced challenges due to a downturn in architectural projects and the departure of key staff for personal reasons. However, these difficulties opened new opportunities. With support from OxLEP, we have successfully built a new market targeting German-speaking expats, with plans to expand further, potentially including Spanish-speaking clients, as we have in-house language skills.



These experiences have also sharpened our UK strategy, offering fresh insights from an international perspective. Previously, I hadn't considered exporting due to perceived complexities and legal challenges, but this shift in focus has proven beneficial.

Working with OxLEP Business' support we have:

- Developed a solid export plan, laying the foundation for future growth.
- Created a targeted international web page, which is nearly complete and will go live soon.
- Almost finished a client booklet detailing our process, leading to a downloadable eBook on making decisions during a dream home build. This content can be easily translated into German for use on LinkedIn.
- Planned a trip to Germany in the autumn, accompanied by a LinkedIn campaign.
- Joined the DBT Export Academy to further enhance our exporting capabilities.

The whole team is now excited about exporting, which aligns well with their skills and architectural experience. This new direction is both encouraging and invigorating for everyone involved.

"The support from OxLEP has been fantastic. I've especially gained from the workshops with networking. It's hard to justify the time for networking alone, with client work looming. Learning gives it a focus as well as being less intimidating for us introverts!"

The coaching support with Norma has opened up opportunities I wouldn't have previously considered. It's helped me to be braver, stay focused and take action!"

<https://clarenasharchitecture.co.uk>





TAP Social Movement



Since 2016, Tap Social Movement has been transforming lives and fostering a more inclusive labour market by creating over 80,000 hours of paid employment for prisoners and prison leavers. Remarkably, around one-third of our staff across five Oxfordshire hospitality venues and our production brewery have been involved with the UK's criminal justice system. In 2023 Tap Social earned the 'Purposeful Business' award at the Oxfordshire Business Awards, 'Best Community Food Endeavour' recognition at the Ox in a Box Food Awards, and was runner up in the 'Consumer-Facing Social Enterprise of the Year' category at the nation-wide UK Social Enterprise Awards.

Despite facing numerous challenges, including the cost of living crisis, fluctuating alcohol duty taxes, and increased prices of essential ingredients due to geopolitical events, we have remained resilient. We adapt by forecasting sales well in advance and making strategic adjustments in response to market changes.

A milestone achievement for us was the opening of The Market Tap by Tap Social on 4 May 2023, a café, bar, and bottle shop in Oxford's historic The Covered Market. This venue was made possible with the support of an OxLEP Business Visitor Economy Grant, which funded essential construction, materials, and equipment. The Market Tap has not only boosted our sales but also contributed to the success of the 'Covered Market Nights' initiative, allowing traders to stay open late from Thursday to Saturday.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled about our plans to expand in 2024, including the launch of an alcohol-free beer and increased distribution of our award-winning craft beers across the UK. We will also strengthen our local ties through community events like yoga sessions, pub quizzes, and markets spotlighting independent traders.



<https://www.tapsocialmovement.com>





Flo's Trading



Founded in 2018 by local residents, People, Place and Participation Ltd. was born out of a desire to breathe new life into the former Children's Centre. Today, that once deserted building has transformed into Flo's – The Place in the Park, a cherished community hub that draws in both locals and visitors alike.

At the heart of Flo's is our community café, open daily, offering a delicious array of healthy food, drinks, and snacks.

Our commitment to sustainability shines through in our plastic-free Refill Shop, where customers can purchase everyday essentials while minimising environmental impact. We are also proud to host a Forest School Nursery, where children's love for learning and the outdoors flourishes.



Flo's serves as a beacon of community support, with dedicated teams delivering programmes that promote equity and social enterprise. Our café plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable community members, offering free meals every Monday and to children during school holidays.

Looking forward, we are refining our strategy for 2025-2030, building on our strong community foundations. Currently, around 20% of our income is grant-funded, but we aim to strengthen our ethical business model to reduce reliance on grants.



The support from OxLEP has enabled us to learn and grow with real purpose. The investment that we put into our marketing plan and business development has encouraged us to look at our business in new ways that we believe will have a long term impact.

In the next five years, we envision expanding our building to enhance community workspaces and trading capacity. We are actively fundraising for this capital investment.

Recent marketing and signage improvements have boosted footfall, and new projects, including a café hatch and a mural by a local artist, are set to further enrich our vibrant park setting.

<https://www.floxoxford.org.uk>



Oxford Brookes Enterprise Centre

'Supportive spaces for start-ups'
at a new hub for innovation and collaboration



It has been two years since Oxford Brookes University-ranked among the top 10 higher education institutions in South East England-opened its Enterprise Centre, offering innovative companies access to lab and office spaces, expertise, and professional networks.

Focusing on health, life sciences, and digital technologies - sectors where Oxfordshire excels globally - the Centre provides facilities for spinouts and early-stage companies, including labs, co-working spaces, offices, meeting rooms, and multi-purpose enterprise areas.



The £2.1 million project, located on the University's Headington campus, was supported by the government's Local Growth Fund, with £837,000 secured through OxLEP. It aims to support the creation of at least 17 start-ups and 74 jobs, fostering the growth of small and medium enterprises by offering an inspiring, collaborative workspace.

Sun Bear Biofuture joined the Enterprise Centre in September 2022. They are working on a synthetic alternative to palm oil with sustainability and low carbon at the heart of their mission. The team had their first funding raise in 2023, and have secured several Innovate UK grants, as well as pursuing a range of different opportunities presented through being based at the heart of a university campus.

The Centre also seeks to cultivate ideas, build relationships with Brookes academics, investors, and key stakeholders, and boost local business growth.

In the two years since its launch, the Enterprise Centre is on track to exceed its goals, having already supported 12 new start-ups and added 57 jobs. In its first financial year, four resident businesses secured £3.47 million in venture capital, with over £5 million in grants awarded to date.



<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/enterprise-centre>



The Oxford Trust's Wood Centre for Innovation

A place for world-leading science collaboration, backed by OxLEP investment



A key focus of OxLEP's Local Growth Fund investment was to support Oxfordshire's world-leading science and innovation community, enabling them to make significant impacts both nationally and internationally.

The investment aligned with the ambitions of The Oxford Trust, which owns the Wood Centre for Innovation in Headington. As part of the £107.5 million Local Growth Fund secured by OxLEP for Oxfordshire, this project has already delivered substantial outcomes.

By March 2023, the project had far exceeded its 2025 target of creating 148 new jobs, significantly boosting Oxfordshire's growing innovation sector. The Oxford Trust's £1.1 million investment, delivered over two phases, has enabled the development of new life science laboratory facilities, increasing capacity within Oxfordshire's innovation ecosystem.

Around £300,000 of this investment was secured by OxLEP through the Local Growth Fund, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to sustaining and expanding Oxfordshire's position as a leading hub for science and innovation.

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/news/article/case-study-oxford-trust's-wood-centre-innovation—place-world-leading-science>



Getting Building Fund

Meanwhile in Oxfordshire



Covid changed the face of Oxfordshire's town centres and city centre. The 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire...' project - led by Makespace Oxford in partnership with a range of local organisations, managed and commissioned by Oxford City Council and backed by Oxfordshire's district councils - is just one of the projects within the £8.4 million - investment secured by OxLEP via the Government's Getting Building Fund tackling this issue head on.



Launched in February 2021, this crucial funding has been instrumental in revitalising Oxfordshire's businesses and communities following the pandemic. The 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire...' initiative aims to transform underused spaces in urban centres, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive local economy.

Despite a rise in vacant units on Oxfordshire's high streets, there is no shortage of enterprising individuals and organisations seeking affordable space. However, structural barriers have made it difficult for these groups to access such spaces.

Since its launch, 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire...' has focused on identifying, securing, fitting out, and letting vacant units to local, independent, and community-driven organisations on short-term leases. This initiative not only supports these organisations and the local economy but also diversifies Oxfordshire's urban centres, making them more attractive to visitors.

By 2025, the project aims to support 112 businesses, create or support 300 jobs, and rejuvenate high streets, strengthening local economies and communities. Makespace Oxford views the initiative as an opportunity to 'reimagine our urban centres,' serving as a catalyst for systemic change.

For landlords, the scheme offers benefits like reduced costs and property improvements, while local organisations gain access to affordable space, grants, and a supportive community to enhance their impact.

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/NdakdrgrLig>



<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/news/article/getting-building-fund-case-study-'meanwhile-oxfordshire...'-reinvigoration-our-high>



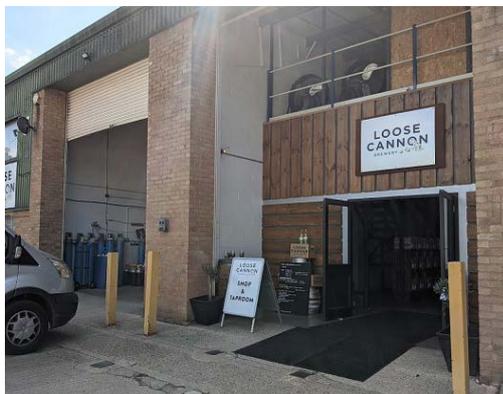


The Loose Cannon Brewing Company Limited



Loose Cannon Brewery, established in 2010, has evolved significantly in response to the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic. With traditional sales channels closed, the business swiftly adapted, developing a strategy to cater to at-home consumption. By leveraging existing resources, Loose Cannon successfully increased market penetration and grew its direct-to-consumer sales.

As the hospitality sector reopened, cautious consumer behaviour and reduced footfall led to a decline in sales to local establishments. However, the brewery responded by creating a Covid-safe space, allowing consumers to socialise safely, thus providing a valuable new revenue stream. Investment in the Taproom, Brewery Shop, and a small craft beer brew kit has driven strong growth, with Taproom sales up 54% year on year and retail sales 14% higher than the previous year.



Grant support from OxLEP has provided a means for Loose Cannon to create further competitive advantage over their competitors as well as an additional source of income. Taproom income has also benefitted from incremental sales as a result of being able to provide food for our guests with the length of visiting time being extended. Customers now have extra reasons to visit the brewery and to stay longer. Looking ahead, the long-term vision for Loose Cannon includes relocating to a larger site within Abingdon to accommodate expansion and create a visitor centre, bar, and restaurant.

The business is also preparing for its 15th anniversary with a series of events and special brews. As it continues to innovate and improve, Loose Cannon remains committed to retaining its loyal customers while attracting new visitors through exciting new experiences.

<https://lcbeers.co.uk>





5C Consulting



5C Consulting deliver both pre-contract, business winning, consultancy support and post contract subject matter expertise in support of military training and experimentation programmes in the UK defence and security sector. More recently, 5C have diversified into the virtual world by providing services across the spectrum of capture and delivery activities needed to create and exploit digital twins in defence and construction sector procurement.

"I use a virtual office at Bloxham Mill and was chatting to other businesses about networking. I was introduced to OxLEP as a route for business support and funding. So, I applied for a Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund grant to help us grow our digital twinning capability and thankfully, we were successful. The grant provided us with two complete IT systems that we use for processing the huge amount of data we capture through our digital capture devices such as Lidar scanners. In addition, the funding was used for consultancy to upskill the team on the latest technologies and we now have three trained operators. Since then, we have won contracts totaling over half a million pounds for the delivery of our services – a route that would have been extremely difficult to pursue without the initial capital outlay that OxLEP were able to help with."

"You can tell that OxLEP's grant application is a really tried and tested procedure. I was very impressed. I've been in defence for many years and if the process of innovation funding for the military was as slick as OxLEP's, many more contracts would get placed."

From the first webinars they give you all the information you need and are very clear on eligibility. I must admit, I was a little daunted at first, but as I stepped into the process the OxLEP team were on hand to help me and make it really straight forward. The team there were always available if I had any issues, they would help me. They were also flexible when things changed my end during the application. Compared to other organisations I have dealt with in the past they are a breath of fresh air".

<https://5cconsulting.co.uk>





Cotswold Electric Bike Tours



As a pioneer of guided e-bike tours in the Cotswolds, we are thrilled to see the market continue to flourish, especially post-Covid. The influx of other operators in the area highlights the growing demand for greener and more engaging ways to explore our outstanding landscapes and charming villages. Unlike conventional whistle-stop bus tours, our e-bike tours make the journey as enjoyable as the destination.

Despite increased competition and unexpected challenges, Cotswold Electric Bike Tours celebrated a record year in 2023. A significant contributor to our success was the OxLEP Visitor Economy Grant, which allowed us to introduce family-friendly tours. Previously, families with children aged 5-13 faced limitations, but our new fleet of Tern e-cargo bikes has solved this issue. Now, children can ride comfortably on the back, enjoying the adventure alongside their parents.

With 25-30% of our guests being repeat customers or referrals, we anticipate even more bookings in 2024. Families who enjoyed our tours are likely to return and recommend us to friends and family, ensuring a steady influx of new guests.

2023 was not without its hurdles. Unseasonably poor weather in July and August affected spontaneous bookings, while rail disputes and station closures also impacted guest arrivals. Nevertheless, the development of family e-bike experiences, funded by the Visitor Economy Grant, played a crucial role in our continued growth.

As we look ahead to the 2024 season, we aim to enhance our offerings by collaborating with local businesses and promoting car-free travel to the Cotswolds. The OxLEP grant not only provided financial support but also valuable partnerships and insights.

Over 75% of our guests this season were from the USA or Canada, many of whom didn't enjoy driving their driving experience. By promoting the rail/e-bike, we offer a greener, stress-free way for international visitors to experience the Cotswolds.



<https://www.cotswoldelectricbiketours.co.uk/>



Measuring Success

OUR SUPPORT IN NUMBERS



Created the first **VISION & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN** for Oxfordshire

DEVELOPED A NEW STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN which involved an independent review of economic activity, stakeholder engagement, and open workshops,



Supported over

1790 businesses from across all Districts



Provided over **2800** hours of expert business support

Delivered 'probably' the widest range of support for businesses, available anywhere in England



Start-Up Businesses supported



Businesses having a 'strategic business review'



Businesses engaged with 'peer to peer' support



Businesses engaged with targeted 'Export' supported



Ukrainian Nationals supported to start a business



43 webinars & workshops

750+ businesses

1444 hours of support



5

Hosted five Women in Business Gathering events during the year with 125 businesses attending.

Coordinated the 'Joint Oxfordshire Business Support' (JOBS) group to increase collaboration with District Economic Development Teams

 **952.8+**

JOBS CREATED

 **1,242+**

JOBS SAFEGUARDED

Inspired over 3250 students, including more than 250 from special schools **3250**

92% 92% of students felt that CareersFest helped them understand more about the world of work

The Oxfordshire Careers Hub supporting 58 secondary schools and FE colleges **58**

307 307 businesses active with careers initiatives across schools/colleges

Supported **35** Community Employment Plans

429 people making progress towards the labour market through the **No Limits Programme**

£441.7m

Supported and monitored the 30 completed **Local Growth Fund** and 6 **Getting Building Fund** projects which overall have invested **£441.7m** in Oxfordshire

115

Supported hundreds of apprentice employers, with 115 entries to the Apprenticeship Awards

287

287 large apprenticeship levy paying employers have been engaged, unlocking over £3.6m of unused apprenticeship levy

97

At least 97 SMEs have accessed unused levy to create a new role through an apprenticeship

9

Funded nine Visitor Economy marketing campaigns engaging over **25 million people**

Almost 2,000 downloads of podcasts across the two first 'OxTalks' series between April 2023 and March 2024

2,000

Grown followers on social media by 7.5% to over

25,810

£840,884

Supported 52 Visitor Economy businesses with total grants allocated of **£840,884**

151

businesses joined 'The Oxfordshire Welcome' scheme

5.1 The Benefits for People

The OxLEP Skills team has been leading the way, enabling and supporting the highly skilled workforce needed by Oxfordshire's businesses

5.1.1 Strategic Oversight on Skills Needs and Provision

A £1.7million contract from the Department for Education (DfE) has been secured to deliver Skills Bootcamps from summer 2024 to March 2025, engaging a minimum of 319 learners. The Skills Bootcamps will provide residents the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track career progression, including a guaranteed job interview for every jobseeker who has completed their Skills Bootcamp course. DfE are offering highly subsidised places to employers for those who want to upskill staff through Skills Bootcamp. Large employers will only have to pay 30% of the course costs, and SME's 10%.

OxGrow OxGROW (a virtual mentoring platform) has recruited 21 Oxfordshire based business volunteer mentors to work with 76 Oxfordshire residents.

The Oxfordshire Skills Dashboard, originally funded by DfE, has been automated and improved. This sustainable resource is available free to access to all Oxfordshire stakeholders, including school career leaders, employability support programmes, work coaches and careers advisors for government contracted support in Oxfordshire, young people, employers, and training providers.

5.1.2 The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards



The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards were introduced in 2017 to shine a spotlight on our county's apprentices – and the businesses and organisations, training providers and schools that support their journey – recognising the huge contribution they make to Oxfordshire's economy across a wide range of sectors.

There have been 601 entries since the awards began, encompassing 442 apprentices, 187 employers, 98 training providers and 18 schools.



Winners of the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2024

The scope of the awards has developed from 55 entries across 6 categories in 2017 to 115 entries across 12 categories in 2024. There have been 57 sponsors and supporters since 2017, with many sponsors returning each year and some previous winners and finalists subsequently becoming sponsors.

Over 180 guests attended the 2024 celebration evening, which saw the 88th award presented.

Sponsors have said:

Most importantly, sponsoring the awards allowed us to give back and contribute to the local community, but it also raised awareness of us as a local employer.

It was great to raise awareness of Jonas Software in Oxfordshire as we've had a quiet presence for the last 12 years.

“

Being a sponsor demonstrates our commitment to apprentices. It was mentioned by a recent applicant

”

“

We benefit from the association with OxLEP and the publicity that comes from supporting these events.

”

5.1.3 The Oxfordshire Careers Hub

OxLEP Skills has been working in partnership with the Careers & Enterprise Company since 2016 to support schools and colleges across Oxfordshire to have a careers programme which enables all young people to find their best next step. Initially the Careers Hub supported 25 schools, and in 2023/24 this has grown to 58 secondary school and FE colleges, including special schools and alternative provision. In 2024/25 this will grow to 61 schools and colleges, meaning that we will be at full coverage in the county with all schools and colleges receiving support from the Hub.

In terms of the progress those schools & colleges have made, at end of the 2018/19 academic year an average of 1.4 out of 8 Gatsby Benchmarks were being met, and at the end of the 2022/23 academic year an average of 5.1 Gatsby Benchmarks were being met. This is expected to increase to 5.7 in 2023/24 and 6.1 in 2024/25. The Gatsby Benchmarks are a framework for developing a good career guidance program in schools and colleges.

The Oxfordshire Careers Hub piloted a small scale CEC funded Hub Incubation Project (HIP) in the 2021/22 academic year, designed to increase teacher's awareness of how their curriculum links to opportunities within local key sectors, and use this to enhance their teaching in the classroom.

The success of the HIP pilot led the CEC to create and offer funding to Careers Hubs nationally, the 'Teacher Encounters' programme in 23/24 academic year. The initiative enabled 48 Oxfordshire teachers from 18 schools, supported by 4 local employers to see how areas of the curriculum can link to careers and bring their lessons to life for their students.

3 Meet Prodrive!

At Prodrive, they like to **challenge the ordinary**. By combining motorsport culture with a free-thinking approach, they **create innovative engineering solutions**.

They also **help brands achieve success** in motorsport and are the business behind some of the **greatest achievements in global motorsport**.

Prodrive is the **world's most successful** multi-disciplined **motorsport businesses**. You are going to **learn a little more** about them and the **careers** they offer.

Curriculum resource created in collaboration with ProDrive.

As a result of the Teacher Encounters programme since its inception, curriculum resources have been created in partnership with key Oxfordshire employers such as ProDrive, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Rebellion, UKAEA, Pearson and Oxford Biomedica.

5.1.4 CareersFest

OxLEP Skills' annual CareersFest, the largest Careers Fair in the county, aims to raise young peoples, and their parent's/carer's, awareness of the opportunities and pathways available to them post 16/18. In 2024 over 3000 students from 28 schools across the county attended over the 2 days. This included a quiet session for young people with SEND and a twilight session which 779 parents signed up for. This year over £13,000 worth of donations were received from the 73 employers/organisations attending, which was used to cover the cost of school/college transport to the Kassam Stadium. The cost of coach travel had previously been the main barrier to schools/colleges across the county attending, and we were delighted by the response.

The feedback from CareersFest 2024 was extremely positive from all stakeholders:

- Exhibitors gave the benefit of their organisation attending Careers Fest a score of 4.5/5 with 5 being very much with 95% saying they would attend again.
- 100% of Careers Leaders felt that they event was either useful or extremely useful for their students, with 100% feeling that it helped their students think about their next step and 100% stating that attending the event will mean their students will explore different pathways that they may not have considered before.
- 100% of parents/carers that attended said that CareersFest has helped them to have a conversation with their child about their next steps, and 100% felt better able to support them with looking at the options available. Also 88% said that attending had made them think differently about what might be the best option for their child post 16/18.
- 92% of students felt that the event helped them understand more about the world of work, with 90% saying it improved their understanding of the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for. 86% said that it helped them think about what they might like to do when they finish school, and 74 % said it had changed their thinking about their future plans, with 91% having learnt more about apprenticeships and 95% being more aware of the businesses and sectors in the county.

“

The best thing about CareersFest is the sheer volume of target demographic potential candidates. It's our premier, and most eagerly anticipated event of the year.

”
- Employer

“
I can't really put a finger on just one thing that made CareersFest valuable. It was all round great! There was a good selection of employers, everyone was super helpful, easy to get to - absolutely brilliant! I came with 2 kids (one already at uni) and they both thought it was great

- Parent/carers

5.1.5 Supporting Disadvantaged Young People

It is also a priority to support disadvantaged young people, with a particular focus on young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and those who face the most barriers when it comes to moving into the world of work. To support this in 2024 we delivered a two-day training course to 38 employers in partnership with the British Association of Supported Employment (BASE).

Topics covered included engaging with schools, making recruitment processes more inclusive, progression routes in Oxfordshire and the role of Supported Employment. Feedback has been very positive with an overall course average score of 4.65 out of 5 from the attendees, and attendees having moved from 46.1% of them not feeling confident in supporting someone with SEND with their future pathway to 100% feeling confident, and 58% feeling very confident.

The Oxfordshire Horizons project was designed to give students experiences of the workplace to build their confidence and aspirations, preparing them to make the most of meaningful work experience in Year 10. This was delivered for over 200 Year 9 students from across 5 mainstream, 4 special schools and 1 alternative provision. The students who took part are on Free School Meals and/or at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training).

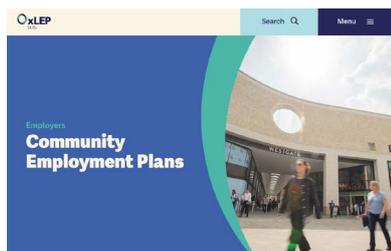
5.1.6 Unlocking the Apprenticeship Levy – Social Contract

The Apprenticeship Levy is paid by large employers (250+ employees) with a wage bill of £3m+. The team identified that there were approximately 240 large businesses in Oxfordshire, most of which did not use all their levy funds.

To date, the programme has unlocked over £3.6m of unused apprenticeship levy, smashing the original target of £1.3m obtaining levy funds from both local and national employers, and creating 224 new apprenticeships. 40 completions through a £100k and replace with '40 apprenticeship completions have been supported through a £100K grants scheme to relieve barriers to apprenticeship starts or completion (delivered to apprentice employers).

5.1.7 Community Employment Plans (CEPs) – Social Contract

CEPs are employer-led initiatives which can form part of Section 106 planning obligations for significant developments which are happening across Oxfordshire. Through the Social Contract programme, OxLEP Skills is currently supporting 35 CEPs, with 52 apprenticeships supported and 52 businesses engaged. To help employers, local planners and economic development leads across the county we have developed a revised CEP evidence paper, endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP), as well as a developers handbook and a monitoring dashboard to enable outcomes of CEPs to be more consistently measured..



<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/employers/schemes-initiatives/community-employment-plans/>

5.1.8 No Limits Programme 1 & 2 – Social Contract

The No Limits programme, funded by Oxfordshire County Council through Government’s Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), managed by OxLEP Skills and delivered in partnership with SOFEA and Aspire, funded 5 triage workers to be located across 19 community food larders and various local community venues in Oxfordshire. Commencing from November 2022, the programme has been offering intensive assistance to those furthest from the labour market with up to 30 hours of person-centred employability support, free digital devices to combat digital deprivation and barriers to employment, education or training (EET), digital skills development, and travel bursaries for those needing financial help to get to interviews, work or an educational institution.

The programme has exceeded its outcome targets:

- 121 individuals progressing to employment
- 262 people work ready
- 429 people making progress towards the labour market; and
- 469 individuals making positive steps forward

To combat digital deprivation, 538 people have received a digital device, with 135 individuals receiving a travel bursary so they can get to employment or training.

80



Individuals have progressed into employment

147



Individuals are ready for work

306



Individuals have made progress towards the labour market

342



Individuals have made positive steps forward

488



Provided digital devices to individuals to reduce digital poverty

123



Assisted individuals with travel bursaries across Oxfordshire

5.2 The Benefits for Businesses

The OxLEP Business team has supported over 1790 businesses between April 2023 and March 2024 with probably the widest range of support available anywhere in England. The businesses were asked if the support they had received had helped them to create new jobs or to safeguard existing jobs. Where this was aligned with specific support it is stated below. Overall, the support from OxLEP Business helped to create 219.8 jobs, and to safeguard 553 jobs.

5.2.1 OxLEP's Women in Business Network

OxLEP Business hosted five Women in Business Gathering events during the year with 125 businesses attending. These events have provided an environment in which everyone can be themselves and have meaningful discussions with fellow women in business from across Oxfordshire.

The Women in Business network has provided an environment in which female founders, leaders and entrepreneurs can network, make new connections, listen to guest speakers and connect with the OxLEP Business team.

“

Lovely to be at something with zero cost and meeting inspiring women. It was so wonderful to meet like-minded female business owners. Thank you for this incredible resource!!

”

5.2.2 Creation of the OxBOoSt Network

The Oxfordshire Business Opportunities and Support Network - OxBOoSt was created and the first event held May 2023. OxBOoSt was created to provide a free, open and welcoming networking opportunity for all Oxfordshire SME businesses regardless of their size, sector or location. OxBOoSt was held monthly with a mix of online and in-person events which engaged over 200 businesses over

11 months. Many of these businesses go to 'pitch' their product or service and have expanded their partner network and customer base as a result.

5.2.3 Start Up Bootcamp

This is offered to pre-start and early-stage businesses and covers the basics of business planning, business structure and taxes, understanding your customers and using social media to win your first customers.

The Start Up Bootcamp was delivered three times, supporting 96 businesses with 275.5 of support. Additional webinars designed to hook people into the club have provided a further 21 hours of support to start ups.

“

A must have for new and early-stage businesses. It really helped me put some structure onto my business and helped me look at some fundamentals in a new way.

”

5.2.4 Business Mentoring

177 eligible businesses answered yes to the question "Would you be interested in having a Business Mentor to help you and your business to grow or go through a transition?". Of these, 23 businesses have started their mentoring support and have received a total 102.5 hours of support to date.

OxLEP's Mentoring tends to attract early-stage businesses turning over around £100,000.

“

The support offered from OxLEP has been fantastic, from inspiring events and networking opportunities to mentoring and practical support, it has been an invaluable resource for me and many other growing businesses in Oxfordshire.

5.2.5 Strategic Business Reviews

Strategic Business Reviews are available to businesses with more than 3 members of staff and the potential to grow, a Strategic Business Review involves a deep dive of the businesses challenges to create a growth plan and provide support on agreed priorities.

151 businesses were eligible for this support in 2023 / 24. 14 businesses are underway with this support and have received a total 107.5 hours of support to date. These businesses have an average turnover of more than £1 million and a combined headcount of over 130 FTE which suggests the Strategic Business Reviews are attracting the correct size and stage of business. 15 jobs were created as a result of this support.

“

The advisor had clearly researched us thoroughly before we met and his tech review took a really valuable deep dive into our operations, not just to understand our systems, but also to review how data flows across our different systems - and where it doesn't! His insights helped us to see how tech lies at the heart of all our operations and he offered us a range of simple to more in-depth options for ways to improve how our data is integrated and how we can analyse our data more robustly to inform our business practice. He followed up the meeting with further ideas and suggestions that we're really grateful for. This was a fabulous benefit of being involved with OxLEP

”

5.2.6 Peer to Peer Support

The OxLEP Business Foundations to Growth groups include around 10 participants that meet for 2 hours per week for 6 weeks. The Foundations to Growth Programme has continued to be popular and we have completed three rounds of the Foundations to Growth programme. In total the programme has delivered 252 hours of support to 28 businesses.

The Peer Networks groups for businesses with 3+ staff are delivered through 8 sessions over, meeting every other week for 2-hour sessions. The Women in Leadership Peer Network started on the 5th September and ran until 12th December. We had 10 active participants in this group. The Business Growth Peer Network started on the 14th November and ended on 5th March. We had 10 active participants in this group. 23 jobs were created as a result of this support.

“

I've been really impressed with the level of support my small business has received from OxLEP so far. From their Foundations to Growth webinar sessions and 1:1 mentoring to their new OxBoost initiative, they've provided high-quality business support each time. Thank you!

”

5.2.7 One to One Expert Business Support

We are proud of our portfolio of over 20 Business Advisors that the clients can choose to meet with and discuss their specific business challenges. A total of 365.5 hours of one-to-one support was delivered over this period. 73.3 jobs were created as a result of this one to one support.

5.2.8 Export Support

Our export support is a package of webinars, workshops and one to one expert support to engage and support businesses considering exporting their product or service. This support was designed to meet four aims:

- To support businesses in deciding whether to export their products or services
- To provide 1:1 support for smaller businesses to explore their exporting opportunity
- Mentoring for smaller businesses who are on an exporting journey
- To increase referral of Oxfordshire businesses to The Export Academy and other relevant national support programmes

47 businesses engaged with the Export webinars and workshops and 70 hours of Export coaching and 1 to 1 support was provided to 9 businesses. Three Oxfordshire businesses who engaged with this support were selected to feature in the 'Horizon International Trade' magazine published in March 2024. These were Tap Social, Objects of Use and Clare Nash Architecture. The publication can be downloaded here:

<https://www.teesglobal.co.uk/horzon-spring-24>

5.2.9 Webinars and Workshops

A wide range of webinars and workshops were developed to support businesses on topics highlighted through the Business Support Tool. Each webinar was held for 1 hour and workshops were 2-3 hours.

Over 30 webinars were delivered with topics including:

- Creating a body friendly work workspace - wherever you work
- Understanding Neurodiversity in Leadership
- Mastering Financial Planning & Management for Small Businesses
- Effective Messaging on LinkedIn
- Finding your purpose – Webinar series
- 5-A-Day For the C-Suite - Five Shock Waves in AI for 2024

The webinars offered during 2023/2024 provided 545 businesses with 846 hours of support.

Workshop topics included:

- Understanding your B2B customers and how they have changed.
- Reducing pressure, increasing performance
- Business Survival
- Developing your purpose
- Business Planning for Growth
- SME Business Net-Zero Masterclass

The workshops provided 221 businesses with 598 hours of support.

“

An excellent, informative session which provided businesses with the tools to embrace AI and make efficiencies to move towards to a better future.

Thank you!

”

“

Stunningly good workshop with all the updated info I need to save masses of time and get more creative - love it!

”

“

The '10 Practical Steps Towards Net Zero - And Why You Should Take Them' was enlightening, informative and I really appreciated that the presentation was based in the reality of 'what actually is' regarding this ever shifting hot topic.

I really enjoyed it.

”

5.2.10 West Oxfordshire 1:1 Support to Grant Recipients

West Oxfordshire District Council asked OxLEP to provide 'wrap-around' 1:1 support to the applicants for their Small Business Grant Scheme in January 2024. 36 1:1 sessions were provided in a compressed timescale of less than 10 days so that these applicants could be progressed through their grant application process.

5.2.11 Supporting Ukrainian Nationals in Partnership with Asylum Welcome

In April 2023, OxLEP Business were asked to provide support for Ukrainian guests interested in starting their own business. An in-person bilingual workshop programme was designed specifically to help this group. The workshops covered the basics of starting a small business and finding customers and managing finances. The workshops were delivered on 9th May & 16th May, 10am – 1pm face to face. There were 7 Ukraine nationals at the first workshop and 7 at the second, although some were different.

Attendees were asked for feedback at the workshops which was all 5 out of 5 and very positive. A follow-up online programme of workshops was delivered in August. There were 12 Ukraine nationals at the first workshop and 8 at the second, although some were different. Some of the delegates engaged with follow-up 1:1 support for their Small Business Grant Scheme in January 2024.

5.2.12 Business Showcase Newsletter

In the Autumn of 2023 the OxLEP Business team created a new output to help raise the profile of the businesses engaging with support. The first Business Showcase Newsletter shows the support offered to businesses and includes 11 case studies from businesses that have engaged with OxLEP support. At least 4 editions of this Showcase newsletter are planned for 2024/25. The OxLEP Business Showcases can be viewed here:



<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/our-impact/oxlep-business-showcase/>

5.2.13 Internationalisation & Inward Investment

Our internationalisation and inward investment team, continue to annually surpass our KPI targets, securing 46 inbound investments, 2,486 jobs, and £570 million in investment in 2023-24. Over the last 5 years the team has landed 204 investments generating over £2.8 billion in foreign direct investment supporting nearly 5,000 jobs. Promotional collateral is continuously updated with seven brochures currently highlighting key sectors such as Robotics, AI, Quantum, Life Sciences, Energy and Future of Mobility, alongside our new platform Oxford Calling.

5.3 The Benefits for Places and Connectivity

OxLEP has continued to oversee strategic, long-term programmes and projects that started long before the period covered by this report, that will deliver impacts for decades to come.

5.3.1 Local Growth Fund

Since 2014, OxLEP has secured over £107.5m of investment to transform Oxfordshire businesses and communities through the government's Local Growth Fund. Three rounds of funding have supported 30 projects that are enhancing the lives and skills of people in the county, enriching places, sparking enterprise and boosting connectivity in Oxfordshire.



By 2030, the ambition is that the Local Growth Fund projects will have collectively supported nearly 9500 jobs, helped the development of over 1,800 new homes and enabled at least another £695m of funding. The benefits of three of the biggest projects will largely be realised nearer to 2030, i.e. enabled funding, jobs supported and housing.

The table below illustrates the outputs and outcomes delivered by the Local Growth Fund projects by March 2024.

Local Growth Fund (LGF) as at March 2024	Target	By When	Actual	Percent complete
LGF spend - complete	£107.6m	March 2023	£107.6m	100%
Sqm new/improved learning/training floor space - complete	7503	March 2023	7372	98%
Jobs created – ongoing	159	March 2025	234	147%
Number of new learners assisted – Ongoing	2808	March 2025	2656	95%
Match funding – Ongoing	£147.2m	March 2025	£94m	64%
Enabled funding – Ongoing	£695.8m	March 2030	£225.6m	32%
Housing – Ongoing	1880	March 2030	500	27%
Supported jobs - Ongoing	9477	March 2030	433	5%

5.3.2 Getting Building Fund

The Getting Building Fund was announced by the Government in August 2020 with the aim of kick-starting the UK's economic recovery from Covid. OxLEP secured £8.4 million of investment for Oxfordshire. Working alongside private and public sector partners, OxLEP has supported six projects. The ambition is that by 2025, the six projects will lead to the creation of 640 new jobs, safeguard 290 jobs, assist 350 businesses and provide opportunities to around 500 new learners.



YouTube



Link to video: <https://youtu.be/VA-YMIDiffU>

The table below illustrates the outputs and outcomes delivered by the Getting Building Fund projects by March 2024.

Getting Building Fund (GBF) as at March 2024	Target	By when	Actual	% complete
GBF spend - complete	£8.4m	March 2023	£8.4m	100%
Sqm new or improved learning/training floor space - complete	800	March 2023	800	100%
Jobs safeguarded - complete	318	March 2023	256	81%
Sqm commercial floor space – ongoing	2762	March 2025	4171	151%
Number of new super/ultrafast broadband connections - ongoing	1600	March 2025	1756	110%
Match funding – ongoing	£5.8m	March 2025	£6.1m	106%
No of businesses assisted – ongoing	364	March 2025	357	98%
Jobs created – ongoing	644	March 2025	499	77%
Number of new learners assisted - ongoing	505	March 2026	283	56%

5.3.3 Visitor Economy Strategic Marketing Campaigns

The 'Only in Oxfordshire' marketing campaign phases 2 and 3 were delivered in spring/summer and autumn/winter of 2023/24 by Experience Oxfordshire. These campaigns delivered:

- A redeveloped What's On in Oxfordshire event listing page
- An online Arts&CultureHub
- 22.3m individuals engaged
- 301k video views
- 212k visits to the campaign web pages
- 748 events promoted
- 154 visitor economy businesses promoted
- Partnership promotion with BBC Gardeners' World
- 400+ photographs of visitor economy sites across Oxfordshire supplied for use in these campaigns and future marketing, multiple videos produced in various formats



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5n_IWdzJZM

YouTube



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkmqCe1fwyM>

YouTube



A number of marketing campaigns were delivered by Cotswolds Tourism including ones to promote pubs, local produce, local artists and craftspeople, and, slower paced attractions – 'slow down, make time'.

The screenshot shows the Experience Oxfordshire website. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Things to do, What's on, Places to stay, Places to go, Plan your trip, Tours, Book experiences, Venue finding service, and Partnership. Below this is a large banner with the text 'ONLY IN OXFORDSHIRE' overlaid on a scenic image of a building. The main content area includes a section titled 'Make a break for Oxfordshire' with a video player and text describing the county's amenities. Below that is a 'Plan your travels' section with text about accessibility and transport. At the bottom, there's a 'Slow down, make time' section with the heading 'Slow down, make time' and a list of activities: 'Time for memories', 'Time to explore', 'Time to stay', and 'Time for nature', each accompanied by a small image.

These marketing campaigns delivered:

- A combined reach across social channels of 2,324,901 people
- Over 9100 views of individual pub listings
- 50 'Made Here' businesses promoted
- 63 'dog-friendly' businesses promoted

5.3.4 Visitor Economy Grant Scheme

The grant scheme, which began in 2022 and continued through until May 2024, was available to businesses who could demonstrate that they were operating within the visitor economy, with a primary function in: tourism, culture, arts, leisure, events, hospitality or independent retail.

The capital and revenue fund had £870,000 available across two grant rounds to support Visitor Economy businesses from across the county with grants ranging from £5,000 through to £24,999 per business. The scheme supported 52 businesses with total grants allocated of £840,884.

The table below shows the Outcomes that the businesses claimed they would achieve during the application process.

Outcomes	No. of Businesses
Adapt, diversify, or innovate its visitor economy offering.	43
Enhance their higher spend customer offer.	14
Encourage visitors to areas not traditionally known as 'hotspots'.	36
Encourage shoulder season/off peak visitor opportunities.	36
Encourage longer stays/overnight visitors.	24
Improve digital presence to grow market share and attract new customers.	21
Support the county's aim to be known as a Covid safe destination.	26

5.3.5 Visitor Economy – Rebuilding Market Share

The Oxfordshire Welcome Scheme was built on VisitBritain's "We're Good to Go" (message of safety and resilience), designed in acknowledgement of the operational challenges still faced by the sector and potential visitors' need for reassurance when booking experiences.

151 Businesses joined the initiative aligning themselves with 14 pledge-points, confirming their commitment to delivering customer service levels embracing inclusivity, accessibility & sustainability, which together form The Oxfordshire Welcome. A logo signify's the pledge.

The Oxfordshire Welcome provided an additional marketing edge that could be used across a range of channels in the UK and Internationally to promote the County and those signed up.



<https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/the-oxfordshire-welcome/>

5.3.6 Vision & Destination Management Plan for Oxfordshire's Visitor Economy

OxLEP created the first Vision and Destination Management Plan for Oxfordshire. Commissioned March 23 and finalised Sept 23, endorsed by a wide number of partners, and adopted and governed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Representing a shared commitment to develop, manage and market Oxfordshire to bring benefits to business, local communities, visitors and the environment. It sets the direction for 5 years should funding be sought.

The Destination Management Plan (DMP) is:

- a **5-year Vision** and DMP should funding be sought
- a **shared commitment** to develop, manage and market Oxfordshire to bring benefits to business, local communities, visitors and the environment.
- commissioned by OxLEP and developed alongside the Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire
- **built on** a detailed market and trend analysis, consideration of the strategic local, regional and national priorities, and extensive engagement
- **built a vision** for tourism in Oxford and Oxfordshire focussed on the **actions** and approaches that will have the **greatest impact**

The DMP and its associated evidence base is available here Publications | OxLEP



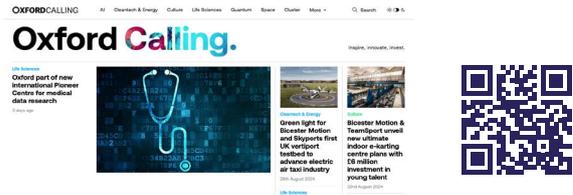
<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>



5.4 Our Communications Impact

During a time of change and increase need, engaging and compelling communications have been more important than ever. OxLEP's Communications team have:

- Delivered a new OxLEP Skills website, designed and positioned to ensure a distinct user journey for the key stakeholders whose primary engagement is with the OxLEP Skills-strand of the organisation
- Delivered a new content-driven site, 'Oxford Calling' which aims to position the county's innovation ecosystem as a world-leader, with the content aimed at attracting further investment into the area



<http://oxfordcalling.co.uk>

- Delivered a refreshed OxLEP Business website, aimed at providing a more streamlined user experience for our OxLEP Business audience, but also more effectively laying out our current provision, our legacy and impact on Oxfordshire's business community.
- Launched and delivered a new podcast series – 'OxTalks', aimed at showcasing Oxfordshire's SME community as well as OxLEP's business support excellence. The podcast series has secured commercial sponsorship from law firm Mills & Reeve.



YouTube



Our most watched/listened to podcast to date is: 'How to create a happy and motivated workforce'. Full details can be found in the YouTube clip description:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1NJ35BAozc&list=PL-RlckUhnIDtg92i1zL24mHMkGHQLxb3tH&index=10>

There are very positive indicators that these communications activities are delivering the desired engagement:

- Across all channels, a minimum of **25,810 followers** on social media – a 7.5% year-on-year rise in overall following between April 2023 and March 2024
- Around **556,000 profile impressions** via OxLEP social media between April 2023 and March 2024 – up 13% on the previous 12 months
- Average social media post engagement rate of 4.3% between April 2023 and March 2024 – up 0.5% on previous 12 months



- Almost **2,000 downloads of podcasts** across the two first 'OxTalks' series between April 2023 and March 2024
- Around **19,000 unique visitors to our OxLEP Business website** between April 2023 and March 2024



6.0 Looking Ahead

2024/25 is set to be another year of challenge and opportunity with further political and structural change following the Local & National Elections and the change of government. OxLEP is in a strong position to support our Businesses and Communities to realise their potential. We are producing a medium-term Business Plan, and we will continue to be agile and proactive as we look forward. We will continue to provide strong leadership, advocacy and convening influence in support of our many talented individuals and businesses across the County.

OxLEP aims to continue to grow its audience so that everyone benefits. A new social media growth plan has been created, a concerted piece of work which aims to appropriately grow our social media audience, allowing us to reach even more 'engaged' individuals and organisations who can make full use of our role and work. Increased engagement will be achieved through a variety of different means, including – greater analysis of content produced and its engagement levels, the use of paid campaigns delivered to a hyper-targeted set of communities, plus leveraging our existing network to connect with other like-minded individuals.

6.1 For People

We are keen to work with the new government to break down the barriers to opportunity, so that more people than ever are on pathways with good prospects. This could include supporting devolution and the delivery of Skills England for Oxfordshire. Through our extensive work around unlocking the Apprenticeship Levy, we are best placed to support the new 'Growth and Skills Levy' so it can be used for a greater range of training courses, so adults can gain new skills and businesses can grow. Our experience in delivering Skills Bootcamp will also support the ambition to deliver more modular courses alongside apprenticeships. The Careers Hub will be able to continue its great work in ensuring that young people are aware of the high-quality career pathways that are available to them within the county.

Two programmes particularly worth mentioning are detailed below.

OxLEP Skills has successfully secured £1.7million funding from DfE to deliver Skills Bootcamps to minimum of 319 learners during 2024-25. The courses identified through the Oxfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan have been created to help support and bridge the skills shortages in Oxfordshire. Employers can also upskill staff through a Skills Bootcamp at highly discounted rates. Large employers will only need to pay for 30% of course costs and SME's 10%. They will need to show progression by the learner within the company or organisation.

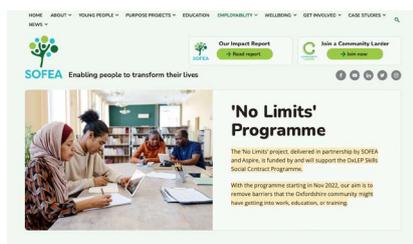


Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible training programmes lasting up to 16 weeks, based on employer / sector 'in-demand' skills to adults aged 19+. The aim is to offer Oxfordshire residents a wider access to opportunities to retrain, update or formalise their skills or acquire specialist skills at Level 3 to 5 equivalent (or Level 2 if in construction or green skills or HGV driving). Courses available from August 2024 include skills training in the following sectors: Health & Life Sciences, Cloud Services and Hospitality, Green Construction, Engineering & Manufacturing.



<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/individuals/skills-bootcamps/>

No Limits 3 is currently being funded through all of Oxfordshire district council's UK Shared Prosperity Funding until March 2025. This continuation of support will ensure that more people can benefit from support, free digital devices to combat digital deprivation, digital skills development, and travel bursaries for those needing financial help to get to work or an educational institution.



<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/individuals/employability>

6.2 For Businesses

OxLEP Business continues to provide a one-stop service for businesses, entrepreneurs, and social-minded enterprises to help them to start, thrive and grow. A new project, CODE RED – Oxfordshire Business Resilience Scheme, aims to help businesses to plan, prepare and be ready for incidents. The challenging economy continues to drive an increasing demand for support.

OxLEP Business has always had collaboration as one of its core values and principles of delivery. In February 2024 OxLEP Business agreed to deliver an enhanced and accelerated business support programme for residents and businesses in West Oxfordshire. Funding through West Oxfordshire District Council's Strategic Priorities Fund from Government is being used to deliver a Business Spark start-up programme and a Business Accelerator programme.



<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/west-oxfordshire-business-support-programme-overview/>

This collaboration will see 50 entrepreneurs helped to start a business and 200 businesses receive more intense support to grow. Following the start of these programmes in West Oxfordshire, Cherwell District Council have decided to collaborate with OxLEP Business on similar programmes for their residents and businesses.



<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/cherwell-business-support-programme-overview/>

6.3 For Places and Connectivity

The new government will mean refreshed priorities for places. OxLEP will prepare and respond to this by refreshing the Strategic Economic Plan approved in 2023 and look to pivot this into a Local Growth Plan once a new Industrial Strategy is prepared.

Oxford Calling has been created and launched by OxLEP in 2024 with the support of key partners from across the area. Its aim is to showcase the incredible strength, depth and world-leading position taken by Oxfordshire's innovation ecosystem.

We aim to provide a virtual showcase for emerging technologies, cutting-edge research and growing companies that call Oxfordshire 'home' and who have benefitted from being located in one of the world's greatest areas for science and innovation. In-turn, Oxford Calling aims to attract the very best 'top in class' science and technology talent to our region in what is a competitive global market.

Through Oxford Calling, we hope to connect with similar clusters worldwide, helping to raise Oxfordshire's profile as a world-leading innovation ecosystem amongst similar, like-minded globally competitive communities and individuals.

OxLEP has ambitions to continue to build on Oxford Calling to promote Oxfordshire as a major Global Hub for innovation and investment.

Oxford Calling – Inspire, Innovate, Invest – Oxford Calling.

What is Oxford Calling



Promoting Oxfordshire as a major global hub for innovation and investment by bringing together the entire Oxfordshire offer in one place.

Connecting with similar clusters worldwide raising Oxfordshire's profile as a world leading innovation ecosystem.

Providing a virtual showcase for emerging technologies, cutting edge research and growing companies.

Attracting science and technology talent to the region in a competitive global job market.



OxLEP will further develop 'Invest Oxfordshire', OxLEPs inward investment Service, with a targeted programme of outreach to promote Oxfordshire, our key sectors and assets. The team will also deliver specialist advice and support to new and existing investors from within and external to the UK, and expand the number of key accounts managed, strengthening the region's relationship with its strategic employers to support them to remain and grow within Oxfordshire.

<https://youtu.be/IFwqRqfUGLE>



The screenshot shows the Oxford Calling website with a navigation bar, a search bar, and a main content area featuring several news articles. A 'Stay in touch' section at the bottom includes an email subscription form.

OXFORD CALLING
INSPIRE. INNOVATE. INVEST.



<http://oxfordcalling.co.uk>

Future support for the visitor economy is available from both Local Visitor Economy Partnerships, Experience Oxfordshire and Cotswold Plus. Funding is being sought to:

- Deliver the recommended actions within the Destination Management Plan, and,
- Develop a new Visitor Economy Recovery Programme (VERP), building on the successful VERP 1, which will focus on innovation support for visitor economy businesses and developing training programmes to meet the sector's needs.

6.4 Increasing Ambitions

OxLEP's 5 year business plan will set increasing ambitions.

We are proud of our results and impacts over this period, but the job of championing Oxfordshire's economic potential, acting as a catalyst and convener to drive a dynamic, sustainable, and growing economy must continue.

The UK and Oxfordshire economies are showing positive signs and we look forward to delivering and reporting on our impacts for 2024 / 2025.



OxLEP's mission is to inspire and support business, to secure investment and drive opportunities for economic prosperity across our communities.



<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com>

Start your business support journey with OxLEP by completing the Business Support Tool at:



<https://www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/oxlep-business-support-tool>

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